## Bible Study

BY MRS. C. F. MENNINGER

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LESSON XIX.

Prophecies of Obadiah, Joel, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah.

"God will never utterly cast out this ancient people."

DIVISION I.

OBADIAH. "The curse of cowardice."

Key verse, 21b. Chapter name: Edom, verse 17.

1. What can be said of the length of Obadiah's prophecy?
2. About whom and to whom is the prophet speaking?
3. What is certain to be Edom's fate?
4. What is the sin for which Edom is condemned?
5. What was the relationship between Edom and Israel? Deut. 23:7.
6. What was to be the punishment of Edom?
7. What is the contrast for Mt. Esau and Mt. Zion?
8. What promise is made to the remnant of Jacob and the returning captives?
9. Upon whom does Obadiah rest the truth of what he says?
10. In what words does Obadiah sum up his vision?

DIVISION II.

JOEL. The prophet of Pentecost.

Key verse, 2:28. Chapter names and verses: Chapter I. Locust, verse 14. Chapter II. Repentance, verse 27. Chapter III. Valley of Decision, verse 18.

1. What great calamities are foretold in the beginning of Joel's prophecy?
2. To what six classes of people did Joel address himself?
3. How will they all be effected by conditions?
4. In what verse is there a call to worship?
5. Select one verse from 1:15-20 that best suggests the "terrible times" to come.
6. To what are the chapter calls in Chapter II?
7. What temporal relief is promised in answer to prayer?
8. The great prophecy of Joel is 2:28-32. By whom and when was it quoted in the New Testament?
9. What is to come upon the enemies of God's people?
10. What is the last vision of the prophet?

DIVISION III.

HABAKKUK. The prophet of faith.

Key verse, 2:4b. Chapter names. Chapter I Chaldeans, verse 12; Chapter II Woe, verse 14; Chapter III Selah, verses 17,18.

1. What is the question that Habakkuk wants answered?
2. What nation was Jehovah to bring upon his people?
3. To what are the Chaldeans compared in 1:15-17?
4. What was the message to be plainly written so all might read?
5. What are the sins recorded against the Chaldeans in 11:6-19?
6. What is the final statement of the prophet? 11:20.
7. What is the heart of Habakkuk's prayer in chapter three?
8. The whole chapter is descriptive of what attitude of God?
9. Why had God come to them thru all their history?
10. Under what circumstances does the prophet say he will rejoice?

DIVISION IV.

ZEPHANIAH. "The Great Day of the Lord."

Key verse, 1:14a. Chapter names. Chapter I Day of the Lord, verse 14; Chapter II Nineveh, verse 3; Chapter III Remnant, verse 12.

1. What are we told about Zephaniah?
2. With what fearful threat of judgment does Zephaniah begin his prophecy?
3. What classes of people are specially noted?
4. How does he describe the great day of wrath?
5. What does the prophet urge his people to do?
6. What five different nations, enemies of Israel, are to be engulfed with the coming destruction?
7. What sins are arrayed against Jerusalem?
8. Outline the respective sins of the classes mentioned in 1:12, 4.
9. Who are contrasted in III:5?
10. What is the substance of III:8-13?
11. What is the tone of verses 14-20?

NOTE—Obadiah's is the briefest message that was delivered. It predicts the doom of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob.

Joel uses the famine and devastation of locusts, which were evidently real, to prefigure the destruction of Israel. His prophecies close with assurance of God's provision for his people in the last days.

Nahum told of the judgment of the Lord upon Assyria for its oppression of Israel. Habakkuk tells of God's judgment upon the Chaldeans for their oppression of His people. The prayer of Habakkuk is said to be one of the finest pieces in all literature.

Zephaniah pronounces judgment for sins, exhorts to repentance, predicts destruction of the enemies of God's people, tells of captivity and restoration, and points to the great day of final rejoicing.

SEVEN SENTENCE SERMONS.

The youth of the soul is everlasting, and eternity is youth.—Richter.

Education is the knowledge of how to use the whole of one's self.—Beecher.

If you have a task worth doing,
Do it now!
In delay there's danger brewing,
Do it now!
Don't be a "by-and-byer"
And a sluggish patience-trier!
If there's aught you would acquire,
Do it now!
—Nixon Waterman.

To him that wills, the way is seldom wanting.—Old Proverb.

Teach me Thy way, O Jehovah; and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.—Ps. 27:11.

He who for love has undergone
The worst that can befall,
Is happier a thousandfold than one
Who never loved at all.
—Lord Houghton.

Why destroy present happiness by a distant misery, which may never come at all?—Sydney Smith.

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# VALENTINE WEST SECRET AGENT

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BY PERCY JAMES BREBNER

## THE LADY'S GLOVE

"YOU here, West?"

"Why not?" and a fair-haired, young-looking man turned sharply to face his questioner, letting a monacle fall from his eye as he did so, suggesting that he saw a great deal better without it. "Why not, Sir Charles?"

"No particular reason, only one hears of fellows meeting you in such rum places, right the other side of the city, or out in the suburbs somewhere, queer places where no one else goes."

"That hardly applies here, does it?" West returned, glancing across the great room rapidly filling with guests. "I wonder what Lady Hanson would say if she heard you call her house a rum place."

"Agree with me, I expect, if she were entertaining a political crowd like tonight. Politics and diplomacy bring some rare specimens into the open. Which are you?"

"Neither."

"You are not going to tell me you come here for pleasure?"

"Is that the only alternative? Why not get local color for sensational articles on social London?"

"Is that the game?"

"You mustn't forget that I am half American, and that half of me is inclined to hustle."

"Your erratic course becomes clear," said Sir Charles. "High and low society, eh? That is why you were at the Sussex Music Hall the other night while we looked for you at the club to make up a bridge table."

"Then it wasn't you who saw me there?"

"Good Lord, no. I don't even know where it is; I only know it's a place where nobody goes. It was Harley who saw you—fellow in the Home Office."

"Was he after local color, too?"

"He didn't say, but I think not." Sir Charles answered. "As he has confessed to half a dozen other queer places during the past month, and as I notice that Jennie Bradshaw has been doing a dancing turn at every one of them, I draw conclusions. It's not much use being in the diplomatic service if you can't draw conclusions, and I am getting quite a lot of practise out of Harley."

Lady Hanson, wife of a cabinet minister, and an American, was a noted hostess. Besides being a very beautiful woman, she had brought her husband a fortune, and had introduced into his surroundings a certain unconventionality which most people found attractive. There was some truth in what Sir Charles Morrison said. People were to be met at her receptions who were unlikely to be seen at other similar functions, artists and literary men who had not yet made good, and leaders of movements which had not yet moved sufficiently to attract attention.

"Hello! The guest of the evening," said Sir Charles suddenly.

West looked across the room. In the curtained archway, opening on to the hall, Lady Hanson was receiving her guests. At this moment she was greeting a handsome, middle-aged man, and her manner certainly suggested that he was a guest of special importance.

"Up to his neck in the European tangle," said Sir Charles, "yet swears there is no political significance in his visit to this country. I fancy the Foreign Office believes him."

"General Rasiloff, isn't it?" said West. "Lady Hanson appears to know him very well."

"Met him in Moscow when her husband was out there. I wonder what you newspaper fellows think of him?"

"More than we print. I am wondering what you diplomatists know."

"Lots more than we tell, even to you, West," and Sir Charles moved away to speak to a lady who had evidently stopped to attract his attention.

Valentine West watched him for a few moments. Sir Charles Morrison was by no means a fool, and West was not anxious that he should practise diplomacy on him as he did on Harley of the Home Office. He moved through the growing crowd of guests in the opposite direction to that which Sir Charles and his companion had taken, and presently managed to get near the archway where Lady Hanson talked to General Rasiloff.

"I must wait a few moments," he heard her say. "There are always the late arrivals, and some of them are important. I am wondering what has brought you to England."

The general smiled, but Lady Hanson spoke as if she had no doubt he would tell her. She was the kind of woman to whom a man might tell secrets he would whisper to no one else. It was an interesting point that they had met in Moscow. Lady Hanson might be deeper in political matters than any one supposed.

Some days ago West had discussed General Rasiloff with the foreign minister in his private room at the Foreign Office, and the minister had suggested that many women gave away secrets in chatter. Since then every social function attended by the general had also been attended by this fair-haired, insignificant young man, who affected a monacle and was supposed to spend his life in killing time. Sir Charles Morrison's knowledge of some of his recent movements warned him that his real business in life must often be in danger of discovery, and West kept in the background now, lest the general should realize he had seen him several times lately, and grow suspicious. Not much was likely to escape those keen, dark eyes.

Lady Hanson glanced at the watch on her wrist and concluded she had given late arrivals grace enough.

"Now, general," she said, taking his arm, "we have a Russian orchestra in the music-room in your honor. You must tell me whether they are as good and as national as people say, and also you can tell me——"

They moved away, and West lost the conclusion of the sentence; and in the music-room he could not get close enough to overhear their conversation. He had to be content with watching them from a distance.

The orchestra was small but excellent, playing Russian music almost exclusively, perhaps on Lady Hanson's instructions, or perhaps because the leader, the first violin, had noted that the honored guest of the evening was a compatriot. It was in the general's direction that he bowed when acknowledging applause.

The music-room was the center of a suite of rooms containing many treasures of art, pictures, china, statuary, and rare furniture; treasures which would have come to the hammer, it was whispered, had not Lord Hanson married a fortune. When the music ceased the guests broke up into groups, some moving in one direction, some in another. The hostess had been called away for a moment, and the general was alone.

Whether is was accidental or whether he intentionally kept on the edge of the moving crowd, West could not determine, but as if he had been watching for his opportunity the first violin was suddenly at the general's side.

"Monsieur, the lady who has just left dropped this," and he held out a long, white glove, which the general took almost mechanically. The musician gave him no opportunity to ask questions; as quickly as he had come he was gone, and was lost among the guests. Conscious apparently that he looked rather foolish holding the long glove as if it were something he did not understand, the general doubled it up, and had thrust it into his pocket when Lady Hanson returned. She was wearing gloves; she had not dropped one, yet she must be the lady referred to as having just left him. The general had been with no other.

Valentine West, looking exceedingly bored, became keenly alert. Not for a moment must he lose sight of Rasiloff. The general may have been surprised to get the glove from the violinist, but sooner or later he expected to receive it, and knew its significance. Just at first West had not been certain of this, but he was the moment he saw the general thrust it into his pocket. The glove was a sign; action of some kind, probably would follow quickly, and wide issues might hang on the general's behavior during the next two or three hours.

The first move came sooner than West expected. Making some excuse to his hostess, the general went hurriedly into the hall as if in pursuit of some one he had caught sight of; and as he went he took the glove from his pocket, feeling it carefully.

He turned it so as to get at the fingers, and from one of them he took something. This was accomplished as he went among the guests, unnoticed by any one except West, who followed close behind him. Under a light in the corner of the hall he casually unfolded a tiny piece of paper, as a man does who finds a scrap in his pocket and wonders what it is; as casually he screwed it up in his fingers and tossed it aside, much to West's astonishment. It could not be of much importance. Then he turned back toward the room he had left and seeing a servant gave him the glove.

"I picked this up. Some one may inquire about it."

The moment he had gone West let his handkerchief fall, and in picking it up picked the paper pellet as well. On it was written in ink:

Tonight. After one. No. 42
Grove Road, Kensington.

He did not throw it away again, but slipped it into his waistcoat pocket. Then he followed the servant.

"By the way, do you chance to have found a glove—a lady's long glove?"

"A gentleman has just given me this, sir."

"That's the one. Thanks very much."

West looked at his watch, made a rapid calculation, and strolled back into the rooms. He caught sight of the general in the distance talking to Lord Hanson, and then he ran into Morrison.

"I'm off soon. Are you going to the club? We might go together."

"Sorry, but I am off now—Fleet street way. Social article, you know. Fleet street gets busy when the rest of the world is thinking of going to bed."

An hour later when Sir Charles remarked in the club that Valentine West was a journalist, he caused a roar of laughter. West had never done a day's work in his life either with a pen or with any other implement, he was informed, and the general impression was that Sir Charles had had his leg badly pulled.

West got his hat and coat from the cloak-room. He was walking, he told the servant at the door. He crossed the road to the railings of the garden in the center of the square, paused there, and was immediately joined by a man in a bowler hat and ulster.

The man listened while West talked.

"You quite understand. Be sure you operate on the right car."

"There shall be no mistake, Mr. West." West walked leisurely out of the square and found his own car at the corner of an adjacent street.

"We get a move on, Amos," he said to the chauffeur, "and it's not in the direction of bed yet. Grove Road, Kensington. The appointment is for one o'clock. Find the road; I'll find the house."

Amos Free never spoke unless he was absolutely obliged, and then he was usually monosyllabic. Now he nodded, looked at the clock fixed in front of him, and regulated his pace accordingly. He had no idea where Grove Road was, and at the Horns, Kensington, he was obliged to pull up and ask a policeman. They were probably the first words he had spoken that day.

Grove Road proved long and dark, with semi-detached houses fronted by strips of garden on either side. Possibly it had seen better days. The houses were large enough to suggest it, but palings were rather diplapidated now, gates hung awry, and there was a plentiful crop of "To Be Let" boards.

"I am going to No. 42, Amos," said West, getting out at the end of the road. "Get up a bit closer to the house when I am in, and if I whistle get desperate. It will be time."

A dim light shone through the semicircle of frosted glass over the door of No. 42; no other light was visible, and the houses on either side appeared to be empty. A moss-grown path led to the door, and the strip of garden had been allowed to look after itself. There was no knocker, only a bell pugh. West pushed twice before there was a sound of shuffling feet and the door opened. An elderly, slatternly woman looked out, and without waiting to be questioned, stood aside to let him enter. Evidently she expected a visitor. She led the way down the passage to the back, opened a door and shoved him into a room, tawdrily furnished, with a most appalling wallpaper, and one gas-jet burning in a three-branch chandelier. The woman closed the door and left him without a word.

Valentine West was prepared for anything, or imagined he was, but he had not expected to be admitted so easily. It made him cautious. He looked quickly about him and listened for sounds in the house. The room was one of two between which heavy green curtains hung closely. At one time there had evidently been folding doors. The door by which he had entered was in the wall at right angles to the curtained opening, and in the wall opposite the curtains, and to one side of it, was another door. It might be the slatternly woman's idea of a desirable sitting-room, but there was nothing in it to indicate what manner of person was accustomed to occupy it. Valentine West was certainly not prepared for the person who came to him.

She entered by the door in the wall opposite the curtains, a girl in shimmering white, a dress which seemed to sheathe and caress the most perfect figure he had ever seen. Her hair was raven black, her eyes deep violet, full of dreams and passion her face that perfect oval beloved by artists. West had wondered what General Rasiloff could possibly have to do with such an entourage as this. The girl before him put a different complexion on the matter. Who was she? Somewhere he had seen her.

He bowed, waiting for her to speak, hoping to find some clue to the mystery. She could not belong to this house. It was a secret meeting-place. West had been working on the assumption that the general had come to England to obtain certain information. The nature of it he did not know, nor did the Foreign Office, though it was very anxious to learn.

"I do not know you," she said, perplexed. Her voice was full and musical, suggested that she might not be quite as young as she looked. She was Russian, or a Pole, perhaps. Her hesitancy gave West an inspiration.

"No, I am not General Rasiloff," he said quietly. "I gather you do not know him personally."

"I am only concerned to know who you are and why you are here," she answered.

West felt convinced she did not know the general. He drew the long, white glove from his pocket and placed it on the table which was between them.

"That may introduce me," he said.

"Really, sir, I have encountered much insolence from men, but yours—what is this?"

"Just an ordinary glove, a woman's glove, possibly not yours, but in the finger of it a scrap of paper was concealed which the general——"

"Then——"

"Oh, yes, he received it quite safely. That is why I am here."

"You come instead of him? You waste your time and mine. I have a message for him; I give it to no one else."

"You do not understand," said West.

"I want to," she laughed. "Is he afraid? It is not like him."

Her attitude was dramatic, and her laugh had a ring in it which once heard was not likely to be forgotten. West knew he had heard it before. Where? If he could remember it might give him a clue how to act.

"Oh, he is not afraid," and he laughed too; "but he is not quite as free as you imagine, nor as he himself would desire. When visitors like the general are in this country we do our best to take care of them. Police watch over their safety wherever they go, and at this moment I imagine the general is doing his best to give his guardians the slip in order to visit you without any one being any the wiser."

"Then why are you here?"

"The general is aware that traps are sometimes set for persons in his position."

"You think——"

"I think he will be quite safe."

Intuition and memory came to Valentine West at the same moment.

This woman, with the fire of passion in her eyes, was too closely in touch with the primitive to hide her feelings successfully. She hated General Rasiloff. Why? She was a Pole; it would be more natural for her to love him. West knew she was a Pole, for remembrance had come to him. She was Elska Maloski, the prima donna who had created something of a sensation during the past opera season. He had heard her sing in "La Boheme" and "Faust." He had never been in her company before, never spoken to her but he knew she had been widely feted and she would certainly not remember all who had been present to do her honor on these occasions.

"I am afraid you are looking upon me as an enemy," he said. "I am most anxious to be considered a friend. You have forgotten me; it is not remarkable, but one does not so easily forget Elska Maloski."

"You know me! How?"

"You have been entertained more than once; is it remarkable that I should have been among the guests? I am a music lover. Only tonight I have enjoyed the music of your friend, the violinist, who was your messenger."

Valentine West was certainly not prepared for the person who came to him. She entered by the door in the wall opposite—a girl in shimmering white.

"Still I do not understand what you have to do with General Rasiloff, nor why you are here. Men have forced themselves upon me before."

"I know the kind you mean; I am not one of them. Let me explain. General Rasiloff is not only a Russian, he is of interest and service to every state in Europe. His own country comes first, I doubt not; but he has done much to advance higher ideals of government in Europe, higher aims of life, to establish a greater sense of brotherhood among the nations. Such wide activities as his naturally embrace many small men—men like myself for instance. No one can be better aware of his wide sympathies than you are. There is no man in Russia, who has worked so steadily for the good of Poland. His partizanship has earned him many enemies in his own country."

"Rasiloff! Poland! You can say all this of General Rasiloff?"

"I know it is true."

"True of Michael Rasiloff!" she exclaimed. "You are either a fool or his dupe."

The passionate tone of her answer set West's brain working rapidly. Surely this house was a trap tonight, baited with this beautiful singer. Yet she did not know the general, that was clear; it was only his reputation she knew, or thought she did. Whatever information the general expected to receive tonight, this was a dangerous place to come for it. What was Elska Maloski's purpose in being here? West made up his mind quickly. He might run some personal risk in telling the truth; he might ruin all chance of discovering the reason of Rasiloff's visit to this country, but the general might be here at any moment, and there was no knowing what peril lay in wait for him in this house in Grove Road.

"Perhaps it is you who have been deceived," he said. "Do you know who General Rasiloff really is?"

"Know him!" she exclaimed.

"Do you know that the name is only assumed for traveling purposes, as an incognito, that he is the Grand Duke Paul?"

She stepped back in amazement.

"The Grand Duke Paul," she said in a whisper; 'the man for whom any Pole would gladly die."

"That is why we look after him so carefully," said West.

"You swear this is true?"

"I do."

She looked straight into his eyes as if she would read his soul. For a moment she stood rigid, and then suddenly she was alive with a movement so swift that West's eyes could not follow it.

"Liar!" she cried, and at the same instant a revolver cracked, fired at him point-blank. West thought. He had no time to utter a sound, and if he moved at all it was involuntarily until something struck him and sent him staggering across the room. It was a man's body which struck him as it fell to the floor. He had heard no sound, but the woman had seen the man come from between the curtains bent on murder, and had fired at him across West's shoulder. He lay quite still, a short dagger still gripped in his hand. West realized that the woman had saved his life and at the same time she had taken her own revenge.

"That was Demetrius Braska who for his own ends lied to me," she said.

"And objected to my telling you the truth," said West, bending down to look into the man's face. It was the violinist who had led the orchestra at Lady Hanson's tonight. At that moment the front door-bell rang.

"Are there any more like him in the house?" West asked, pointing at the dead man.

"No."

"Will you allow me to take care of that revolver?"

After a moment's hesitation she gave it to him.

"I will open the door," he said.

The girl had saved his life, and instinctively he was protecting her against the result of her action. He was not afraid of the duke, but he was very anxious the slatternly woman should not know what had happened not yet at any rate. There was no knowing what interest she might have in the dead man.

The duke was armed and prepared for surprise; West saw that the moment he entered. Without a word he closed the door and led him to the room at the back. Elska Maloski swept him a deep courtesy, and as he acknowledged it he saw the dead man on the floor.

"I shot him," she said calmly. "I will tell your highness why."

"I am General Rasiloff. Your message——"

"No, no, you are Duke Paul," said the girl. "I know. Your friend here has told me."

The duke looked at Valentine West and then caught sight of the glove lying on the table.

"Is this a trap?" he asked, and it was quite evident he was ready for emergency.

"It was," said West. "There lies the man who brought you the glove tonight at Lady Hanson's."

"Demetrius Braska who lied to me," said the girl excitedly. "I will tell you about him and about General Rasiloff—Michael Rasiloff. When I was a child there was discontent, revolution in Poland; it is often the same. My father was in it, my mother, too, I think. This Michael Rasiloff was also one with them at first, then turned traitor, and was afterward one of those sent to suppress the rising. There are horrible stories told of his doings. Of one I know. My father was killed in street fighting; my mother, with many others, was arrested. This Michael Rasiloff was in love with my mother, what he called love, and because she would have nothing to do with him she was, at his instigation, most foully treated, dying at last under the whip."

"I know the man," said the duke. "It is a common name. I did not think of this man when I adopted it."

"He was in high favor," the girl went on, "not to be punished; but I vowed to remember, and some day pay my mother's debt. The resolve has been with me always. Even at my moments of greatest triumph, when an audience has gone mad at my song, it has been with me. The man lying there became my friend. Persecution had made him flee from Russia to England—he said so, but he may have lied in that too—and he was full of sympathy for me. He had a plan to get General Rasiloff to this country. There was certain information the general wanted concerning plotters in Russia; he would go anywhere to get that information. I wrote a letter, putting a sign to it which Demetrius said the general would understand. I said I could give him the information he wanted; that he must come to London; that at some function or other, or in some other way he would receive a lady's long glove in the finger of which he would find the appointment. It was the scheme of Demetrius, and it pleased me. I waited for him tonight. Had General Rasiloff come he would be lying there instead of Demetrius. Had your highness come instead of this gentleman you would have been lying there. I have never seen you; I should have taken you for the general whom I have never seen either. God! To think of it."

"It seems, sir, you have saved my life," said the duke, turning to West.

"And the lady has saved mine."

"Who is this man who is so anxious to make an end of me," and the duke stooped to study the face of the violinist. "No, I do not know him."

"The police may find out something about him," said West. "I imagine you have so nearly got the information you require, perhaps without being aware of it, that this man, understanding how dangerous you were, employed this method of removing you."

"I should be glad to know who you are, sir. There is still much I do not understand in this business."

"Shall we not think of the lady first, your highness. I am very personally concerned since I owe my life to her. We do not want it known that either she or we have been in this house tonight. I propose to send her away in my car at once, and then, if your highness will allow me to return with you, I can explain."

"I am not sure I can do that."

Valentine West took a small silver token from an inner pocket and showed it to the duke.

"I shall be pleased to drive you back," said the duke, and then turning to Elska Maloski, he asked: "Can you not tell me something of that dead man's secret?"

"Nothing. It is true, I know nothing. I was only concerned with Michael Rasiloff."

"I can tell you something of him," said the duke. "Months ago he was disgraced. He is in prison at this moment. I think you may safely leave him to the Russian government."

A few moments later thre was a low whistle in Grove Road and a car came out of the darkness and stopped at the gate of No. 42.

"Amos, you will drive this lady to Charing Cross. If she wishes to go further you are at her disposal. You will not return here for me."

West helped her in.

"You are sure the woman in the house knows nothing about you?" he asked.

"Quite sure. Braska has only had the house a month. The woman is not in the house now. She came daily and only stayed late to let you in. She left directly afterward."

"Then I think I can promise that you will hear nothing further about it tonight. Good-by, and thank you."

"Perhaps we may meet again," she said, but it was difficult to decide whether she wished it or not.

"Perhaps," he answered. "I have usually found the world a very small place."

A little later Valentine West drove out of Grove Road with the duke.

"The police will find him tomorrow," he said in answer to a question from the duke. "I shall arrange that. His death will be a mystery. Too many inquiries will not be made."

"Your secret service is more thorough than I supposed, Mr. West. It would interest me greatly to know how you discovered what was my purpose in coming to England."

"I only discovered it this evening, your highness."

"And my journey has been fruitless. I had hoped for evidence against men I suspect in Russia; men who, I believe, are responsible for much evil, who are a curse to their country. I wonder how much that man Braska knew."

"I cannot say. In this affair my business has been to protect your highness," and Valentine West smiled to himself in the darkness of the motor. It would have surprised the duke had he known how curious England was about his visit; had he overheard the interview between West and the foreign minister. He might have had even a greater respect for the secret service of this country.

"I have to thank you for guarding me most efficiently, you with the help of Providence. Had my car not got a punctured tire outside Lady Hanson's I might have arrived first, and then probably I should be lying in that empty house at this momen."

"In this case, your highness, Providence has not played much part," said West when the duke put him down in Piccadilly. "I had your tire very thoroughly punctured when I left Lady Hason's tonight."

The dawn was breaking as Valentine West entered his chambers in Bruton street.

MAKING A MATCH.

He stepped up on the rear platform of a trolley car with a new pair of fur-trimmed gloves on his hands. He had to remove them to light his cigar, and one of them fell to the platform, and from thence to the street without his noticing it. When he got ready to put on his gloves again, one of them wasn't there. He pondered for a moment and then threw the other glove into the street.

"Why did you do that?" he was asked.

"Why, you see, it is this way. The glove that I lose will be picked up. It will do the finder go good. I throw the second glove after the first. He will follow the car and find it, and thus he will get a matched pair, and I will go to the store and buy another. Thus again each of us will have a pair of gloves and all will be well."

The group on the platform didn't exactly understand his philosophy, but they smiled nevertheless.

ARRIVING AT A CONCLUSION.

A barn down on a Long Island farm had been burned, and an agent went down to see about it.

"What was the cause of the fire?"

"It was a thunderstorm. I guess," was the reply.

"But we have had no thunderstorms for a month or two."

"Then, it might have been tramps smoking in the barn."

"But we have no tramps. They have all gone to war."

"Then it might have been a spark from the chimney of my house."

"But your house is too far away."

"Could—could it be what they call spontaneous combustion?" thoughtfully asked the farmer.

"But, you see, you didn't have any oiled rags about the barn, did you?"

"No, I can't say I did. I'll tell you what. We had better arrive at some conclusion. We had better say the hired man dropped a candle into the hay when he went out in the evening to feed the stock. That will account for the fire and you can hand me over the insurance."